

PRESCHOOLERS

BUREAU OF CHILDREN AND ADULT LICENSING



STATE OF MICHIGAN
Department of Human Services

www.michigan.gov/michildcare

WHAT ARE PRESCHOOLERS LIKE?

Preschoolers are curious, imaginative and happy to do things with you. They develop many new interests, abilities and needs. They show interest in dressing and undressing themselves. They are able to control their own bodies, love to hop, jump, run, and climb. They are problem-solvers. They take pride in their ability to figure out problems all by themselves.

By the age of three or four, children are leaving the toddler period and entering the broad new world of the preschooler. This is a wonderful time of exciting exploration and independence. Interests in the world outside of home develop. Preschoolers learn from numerous activities, ideas, and experiences. They are great investigators of everything new. They make new discoveries, and become very excited about their findings. There are more important people in their lives now, and preschoolers like to talk to these important people about everything!

Preschoolers learn to cooperate, wait their turn, and share their toys and ideas with others. By the age of four, children want each other's approval. Some may have "best friends." But sometimes preschoolers are jealous of each other. Playing with other children may not go smoothly all the time. You should expect some disagreements.

At this same time, preschoolers' imaginations grow by leaps and bounds. Sometimes it may be hard for them to know the difference between real and make-believe. They often have imaginary friends who sometimes take the blame for things they do wrong. These imaginary friends are also fun playmates. Play acting is a great way for children to express themselves and use their imaginations.

Children of all ages learn by watching and listening to adults. Preschoolers are very aware of their own world and will look to you for direction. They need you to encourage and guide them while they "try out" their new skills and independence. Sometimes the world is so exciting that preschoolers will try everything at once. It is helpful to give them only a few choices so they can make their own decisions. Preschoolers may make some mistakes, but this is only a way of learning. They will learn best when they have your kindness, patience, and acceptance.

"Why" is a word that you will begin to hear often. Children will question your rules and actions as they try to understand the world around them. Always give them simple answers to their questions.



Preschoolers may develop new fears of water, of the dark, or of animals. They may think about many “scary” things. Talk to the youngsters openly about their fears and give them your steady, loving support.

Preschoolers are interested in finding out about their bodies: “How fast can I run?” “How fast can I climb?” “How many toys can I carry at one time?” These children are eager to learn how each part is used.

They will ask many questions, such as “Why are boys and girls different?” They will explore and feel their bodies to understand them. This curiosity is natural and part of growing. It is very important that preschoolers know what their bodies do and why. It is also important that they are not ashamed of their bodies or afraid to ask questions about them. Honest, gentle answers to questions will satisfy preschoolers and will calm their fears. Remember: children who feel good about themselves are children interested in learning and living.

WHAT CAN PRESCHOOLERS DO?

Since the preschool period is a time of so much growth and development, it may be difficult to keep in mind what to expect and when to expect it. Children’s growth during this period does, however, occur in four main areas:

SENSORY-MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Sensory-motor development is the change in the way children use their muscles to move around and do things. There are two kinds of muscles. Large muscles are used for such things as walking and bending. Small muscles are used for pointing and picking up things. Children use their muscles as they learn to take care of themselves. This is called self-help.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Language development is the children’s ability to listen, understand, and use words to express themselves.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Cognitive development is the growing ability to listen, understand others and follow directions. This area also includes the way children think, reason, and solve problems.



SOCIAL-PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social-personal development includes the children’s growing awareness of themselves, how they feel about children and adults, and how they play and talk to others.

THREE-YEAR-OLDS



SENSORY-MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Large Muscle

What can three-year-olds do?

They can:

1. Balance on one foot for a short time;
2. walk on a line;
3. walk and run on their toes for a short time;
4. walk downstairs without help;
5. jump from the bottom step;
6. run well;
7. catch a large ball with arms straight;
8. do a forward somersault with help;
9. jump forward without falling; and
10. stand up straight with both feet together.

Small Muscle

What can three-year-olds do?

They can:

1. hammer nails and pegs;
2. put pegs in pegboard holes;
3. build a tower of nine blocks;
4. imitate building a bridge of three blocks;

5. draw around their own hands and feet;
6. draw simple forms and figures;
7. paint with a large brush;
8. take tops off containers and put them back on again; and
9. follow the outline of a simple shape with a finger.

Self Help

What can three-year-olds do?

They can:

1. unbutton buttons;
2. dress and undress with some help;
3. clean up spills with help;
4. zip;
5. try to lace shoes;
6. wash hands and face without help;
7. brush teeth with help;
8. help set the table; and
9. sometimes tell you when they need to use the toilet (but will often need to be reminded).

Language Development

What do three-year-olds do?

They:

1. begin to speak in longer sentences;
2. describe pictures, including the ones they have drawn;
3. repeat nursery rhymes and songs, and know at least one from memory;
4. repeat three short words in the same order that they hear them;
5. ask questions beginning with “What?” “Who?” “Why?”
6. answer “Who?” “What?” “Where?” questions,
7. know the names of many objects;
8. give simple reasons for behaviors and events;
9. talk to themselves or others about experiences, real or make-believe;
10. whisper;
11. begin to talk more clearly;
12. listen to longer stories; and
13. understand words that show place.

Cognitive Development

What do three-year olds do?

They:

1. begin to match, recognize, and name some colors, shapes, and textures;
2. put together simple five to ten piece puzzles;
3. make simple forms with clay;
4. draw a figure with a head and body,
5. count to five;
6. count three objects;
7. are starting to be aware of time—such as day and night, morning and afternoon, now and later;
8. know who is older and younger than they are;
9. point out likenesses and differences;
10. understand the meaning of the words “in,” “out,” “up,” “down,” “under,” “over,” “next to;”
11. begin to understand differences in size such as “big,” “little,” “thick,” “thin,” “tall,” “short,”
12. give answers to simple questions, and love to ask questions themselves; and
13. enjoy listening to stories.

Social-Personal

What do three-year-olds do?

They:

1. like to do things for themselves;
2. understand how they take turns and share, though they may not be generous;
3. listen while others talk;
4. play with a group of other children;
5. like to help around the house;
6. show affection for younger children;
7. choose a special friend, even though they are sometimes jealous of one another;
8. like to pretend to play act;
9. are eager to please;
10. may say “I don’t like you,” instead of hitting;
11. ask for something instead of taking it;
12. ask for help, even when they can do it alone; and
13. choose activities by themselves.



FOUR-YEAR-OLDS



Self-Help

What do four-year olds do?

They:

1. button coats, shirts, or dresses;
2. may lace shoes correctly;
3. dress and undress, but may need help tying
4. like to choose their own clothes;
5. use the toilet alone;
6. brush their teeth without help;
7. may sleep all night;
8. still need a nap;
9. like to serve and choose food for themselves
10. use a fork and spoon; and
11. carry a glass of water without spilling it.

SENSORY-MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Large muscle

What can four-year-olds do?

They can:

1. walk across a board with help;
2. walk backwards;
3. hop on their toes with both feet;
4. bounce a ball;
5. throw a ball overhand;
6. catch a large ball with arms bent;
7. do somersaults without help; and
8. jump over a low rope.

Small Muscle

What can four-year-olds do?

They can:

1. learn to make simple shapes by folding a piece of paper;
2. cut between lines one inch apart;
3. use sewing cards with large holes
4. string small beads;
5. carry objects carefully without dropping them; and
6. connect dots with pencil or crayon.



Language Development

What do four-year-olds do?

They:

1. tell their age;
2. answer questions about themselves;
3. listen to and tell long stories confusing fact and fantasy;
4. act out a story;
5. tell a story of their own;
6. show pleasure in using new words;
7. play with words in silly ways;
8. ask questions all the time;
9. give longer answers to simple questions;
10. clap hands to the rhythm of words;
11. tell the use of familiar objects;
12. and use past tense.

Cognitive Development

What can four-year-olds do?

They can:

1. draw a person with a head, body, arms, legs, and sometimes features;
2. put together a ten piece puzzle;
3. tell you when they have finished an activity;
4. name seasons of the year;
5. match the letters in their name;
6. match, recognize, and name more colors, shapes, and textures;
7. tell differences in sounds such as loud or soft, high or low;
8. count from one to ten;
9. tell front, back, inside, and outside of clothing;
10. understand when daily activities happen; and
11. understand "how many" up to "four."

Social-Personal Development

What do four-year-olds do?

They:

1. show anger towards parents and playmates;
2. like to be the leader and may boss, criticize, and tattle on others;
3. call others names, talk back, and argue;
4. expect others to praise their work, and often praise it themselves;
5. like to show-off and brag, especially with adults;
6. like to be the winner;
7. are more interested in their friends than grown-ups;
8. like to do "grown-up" things;
9. like to experiment and solve problems without adult help;
10. may wander away from you;
11. need more space for play;
12. are easily encouraged or discouraged;
13. comfort others;
14. may say they are sorry without being forced;
15. and know what belongs to them and what belongs to others.



EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Your three- and four-year-olds are growing up. Remember, they are now more active, alert, and curious. Children will grow at their own special rate. You should expect a wide range of development among children of the same age. However, problems may arise that need your attention. The earlier the problems are found, the more the children can be helped.

If children seem to act differently from others their age, it may simply be that their styles are different. Some troublesome behavior may be caused by a physical need. The following pages will help you look for “warning signs” of problems that may need further care.

If you continue to be concerned you may want to contact their doctor to speak with the parents who may discuss the concerns.

PHYSICAL NEED

Talk to the Parents

Children of this age have control over their movements. Yet, some children are clumsier than others, and may have trouble controlling their bodies. ‘this could be the sign of a problem. You should talk with the parents about it to prevent the problem from getting more serious. **But in case of sickness or an accident, don’t wait. Notify the parents and get a doctor’s help as soon as possible.**

These are some signs of physical needs:

1. The child has trouble controlling his or her arms or legs.
2. The child falls a lot, walks poorly, or can’t walk at all.
3. The child holds one hand at his or her side and never uses it to pick up or hold toys.
4. The child’s neck, arms, or legs are stiff and hard to move.
5. The child drools all the time.

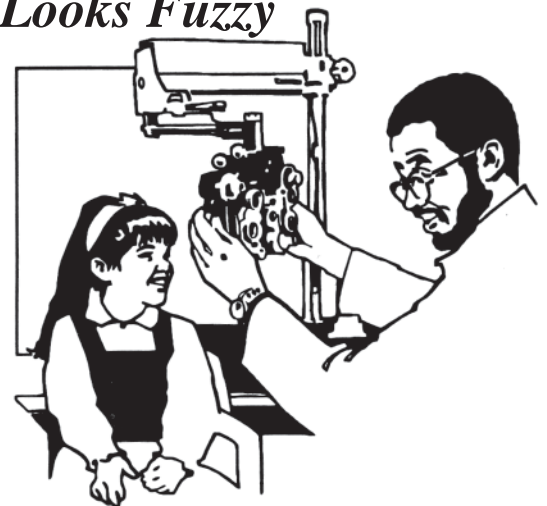
6. The child keeps falling asleep during the day.
7. The child often faints, wets, or soils pants even though toilet-trained, and lies on the floor with arms and legs stiff. The child then jerks his or her body around with the back arched. The child will sleep deeply afterwards.

SIGHT NEEDS

Poor eyesight can cause a child to misbehave. These are some of the signs for sight needs:

1. The child complains of itching or burning eyes.
2. The child complains that “things look fuzzy” or that he or she “sees double.”
3. The child complains of dizziness, headaches, or feeling sick to the stomach after doing close work.
4. The child rubs his or her eyes frequently.

That Looks Fuzzy



5. The child often bumps into objects.
6. The child may squint or hold objects close to his or her eyes to see them.
7. The child has trouble doing close work.
8. The child’s eye are often swollen, crusty, or red and watery.
9. The child rolls his or her eyes around, is cross-eyed or does not use both eyes to follow objects.
10. The child is unable to see things far away.
11. The child often waves fingers in front of his or her eyes.
12. The child does not point to, wave back at, or imitate other people.

A DOCTOR'S ADVICE/HELP

Signs of problems which may need a doctor's advice include:

1. cuts or bites that are infected, or may have swelling or a white look around them;
2. many skin rashes, lumps, or sores;
3. throwing up and high fevers that last for a long time;
4. constant coughing;
5. refusing to *eat* for more than three days;
6. continual diarrhea; or
7. unusual paleness and coldness of the skin.
8. If a child falls and hits his or her head, watch for these signs:

constant coughing;
dizziness,
throwing up,
headaches,
sleepiness, or
wetting.

If you see a combination of these signs call a doctor right away. Allow the child to rest quietly or sleep. Check the child every half hour.



LEARNING NEEDS

Some children learn more slowly than others and may need special help. These are some things to look for.

1. The child doesn't walk or talk by the age three.
2. The child cannot understand or remember simple directions.
3. The child has trouble doing many sensory-motor activities, especially those skills in which the child is to use both hands and the eyes, such as putting clothespins in a box.
4. The child cannot point to different parts of his or her body when asked.

HEARING NEEDS

Sometimes when a child is cranky or does not pay attention to you, it may be because of a hearing problem. These are some warning signs of hearing needs.

1. The child doesn't talk.
2. The child doesn't follow direction, or doesn't react to loud sounds when his or her back is turned.
3. The child often will not come when called.
4. The child has many earaches or has a runny fluid coming from the ear.
5. The child has little voice control. He or she screams a lot or makes strange sounds.
6. The child bumps his or her head on the pillow to go to sleep.



EMOTIONAL NEEDS

When a child is upset, he or she may hit, cry, bite, or kick. If the child does these things most of the time, something may be wrong.

UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR

1. The child often cries without a reason.
2. The child never plays with other children and prefers to be alone in the corner of the bed.
3. The child does not like to be held or touched.

4. The child often hits or bites his or her own body on purpose.
5. The child constantly rocks back and forth and makes unusual noises.
6. The child does the same movement over and over.
7. The child's behavior suddenly changes.
8. The child says the same things over and over.
9. The child never says anything on his or her own, and only repeats what others say.
10. The child hits, kicks, or bites every time he or she tries to play with other children.





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